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RAISE HERRING CATCH QUOTA IN SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

Improved conditions in the herring fishery of southeastern Alaska will permit the catch quota for reduction purposes to be increased to 17,500 tons (140,000 barrels) during the 1956 fishing season, John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said today upon the signing of an amendment to the Alaska commercial fishing regulations. In 1955, the catch quota was limited to 100,000 barrels.

Of the 1956 total of 17,500 tons, a limit of 6,250 tons (50,000 barrels) will be permitted from the important Sitka populations. In addition, two small areas that were previously closed to fishing will be opened this year for the taking of herring for use as bait. One of these areas is in Silver Bay, at Sitka; the other at Fish Egg Island, at Craig. In each area herring fishing is restricted to a take of 125 short tons for bait purposes.

There is no change in the regulations for Prince William Sound and Kodiak.

Director Farley stated that Service biologists report that Alaska herring are increasing from their low numbers of past years. Natural conditions in Alaskan waters during the past three or four years have been favorable for the growth of herring, as a result of which an increase in the 1956 supply is indicated.

After several public hearings and meetings in Alaska, at which recommendations by interested persons and the findings of Service biologists were discussed, substantial public support of the Service's proposals was voiced, Farley said.

He added that the Service's proposals for 1956 will prepare the stage for further research to test the effects of fishing on the conservation of Alaska herring by setting aside the Juneau herring population for study purposes. Purse seining of these fish, except for bait, will be prohibited.

At the same time the Service is allowing limited fishing on the Sitka, Craig, and Ketchikan herring stocks. Careful studies of spawning and population growth will point up the effects on the fishery.

The five-year study program will be carried out with the active participation of herring fishermen, Alaska salmon trollers, and herring bait fishermen. By the end of that time, the southeastern Alaska herring catch will be on a maximum sustained yield basis, insuring the proper conservation of this valuable species.

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